CBS Evening News 8-8-1974

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From Thursday, August 8th, 1974 The CBS Evening News with Water Cronkite reporting on the resignation of President Richard M. Nixon

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tonight and Vice President Ford will become the nation's 38th president tomorrow that word comes unofficially from aides and associates of both men but not from the two men themselves the swiftly moving events of this busy day in Washington tend to confirm those events included a late morning White House meeting between the president and the vice president Ford's cancellation of a planned trip to the west coast and Hawaii the president scheduling of a televised address to the nation at nine o'clock tonight Eastern Daylight Time and as invitation to congressional leaders of both parties to meet with him before that address for return in a minute with the detailed reports from CBS News headquarters in Washington this is the CBS Evening News with Walter Cronkite and in Washington Eric severide Dan Rather Bill Jones Bruce Morton Roger Mudd Connie Chung ferry Drinkwater in Yorba Linda California and Ike Pappas in Grand Rapids Michigan since Monday when President Nixon released the new tape the smoking pistol of the Watergate evidence had tied it directly to him events have been rushing toward one seemingly inevitable conclusion removal from office now if all reports are correct there's no reason to doubt them mr. Nixon has chosen to take that final step himself more from dan Rather according to his staff unless the president has a sudden change of head and heart his announcement will be resignation he reached a tentative decision to do so Monday Monday night in a Potomac cruise aboard the yacht Sequoia his daughters urged him not to do it he agreed to reconsider as of this hour says his staff he has not changed his mind last night at a family dinner upstairs in the White House some of the family was in tears the president was not presidential speech writers worked through the night preparing a possible resignation address the president

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resignation address the president himself worked on it early this morning in late morning Vice President Ford was summoned to the president's Oval Office the meeting began at 11:00 a.m. Washington time in an hour and 10 minutes it was over at 12:20 this afternoon presidential news secretary Ronald Ziegler stepped before microphones and an overflow crowd of reporters in the White House briefing room I'm aware of the intense interest of the American people and of you in this room concerning developments today in over the last few days this has of course not been a different has been the difficult time the president United States will meet various members of the bipartisan leadership of Congress here at the White House early this evening tonight at nine o'clock Eastern Daylight Time the president United States will address the nation on radio and television from his Oval Office Ziegler said no more he walked out swiftly White House aides said privately quote it is over some secretaries wept but the general tone mood and atmosphere with most people around the White House during the day was downcast but businesslike during the afternoon the president did more work on his speech he began clearing out his desk Manolo and pheenoh Sanchez Nixon family servants for virtually a lifetime were seen loading household effects into cars at 5:30 p.m. the president vetoed the agricultural environmental and Consumer Protection Act aides said it would be his last official legislative action as president the tentative plan all involved emphasized that it is a tentative contingency

plan subject to change at any moment if the president orders that is for the president to announce tonight that he is submitting his resignation to secretary Kissinger effective late tomorrow morning with the expectation that Vice President Ford will be sworn in as president around

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will be sworn in as president around midday tomorrow under this tentative plan the president would leave Washington flying aboard Air Force One or as he prefers to call it the spirit of 76 for California tomorrow morning under this plan he would leave Washington as president of the United States he would arrive in California as a former president dan Rather CBS News the White House sources close to vice president Ford say he promised his top aides today a smooth and orderly transition to the presidency and that preparations for that are well underway Phil Jones reports on this fall and fateful day for the vice president at the Ford home in Alexandria Virginia early this morning Secret Service agents had their bags packed ready to depart on the Vice President scheduled 11 day campaign trail Ford emerged he was still waiting on some signal from the White House on whether he should cancel that trip however he had flatly started preparations for transition of power days ago shortly before going to this Medal of Honor ceremony Ford received word that the president wanted to see him for the first time reporters and friends noticed a grim preoccupied Gerald Ford Ford went directly to the White House from the ceremony his private meeting with mr. Nixon lasted for an hour and 10 minutes a close congressional friend said it would be at that meeting that Ford would be told for the first time that the president plan to resign that report seemed to be confirmed as Ford summoned Secretary of State Kissinger to his office across from the White House this afternoon this meeting lasted nearly two hours the vice president said later they discussed foreign policy as it has been administered for the past five years Kissinger told Ford several months ago he would be honored to serve in a Ford administration and indications are Ford will ask the entire Nixon cabinet to stay on but not so certain is Ford's choice for Vice President the list is long but melvin laird appears to have the inside track Laird left town today

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the inside track Laird left town today and is in hiding at a Virginia fishing resort also mentioned Nelson Rockefeller although some feel he would be unacceptable to conservative Republicans George Bush the Republican National Party Chairman is also high in the speculation meanwhile back at the vice president's home more telling signs that the Fords will be moving to the White House the street was cordoned off telephones were brought in for reporters two of the four children arrived home we're the two others reported on their way and mrs. Ford came out to talk to reporters after a visit from a dress designer and seniors I am according to Ford's office the vice president intends to be home tonight with mrs. Ford to watch the president's television address Joe Jones CBS News Washington one of those new vice presidential possibilities Nelson Rockefeller has announced a news conference in Bangor Maine for tomorrow evening at 6:45 Eastern Daylight Time the apparent certainty of the president's imminent resignations raised two big questions on Capitol Hill what to do about the impeachment and should mr. Nixon be granted immunity from criminal prosecution Bruce Morton reports on the house some members of Congress say that unless the president's resignation includes some confession of guilt the impeachment process should continue but that decision is up to the leaders of the House and today's speaker Carl Albert said know if the president resigns Albert said the House Judiciary Committee should complete its report lay out the case against mr. Nixon on the record and that should be that no vote no impeachment by the full house I feel if the president resigns that should be the end of the impeachment proceedings this should put an end to to the to the

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this should put an end to to the to the Watergate affair as an issue involving incumbent public officials elmer also said he did not think Congress should pass a resolution urging that the president be given immunity against future prosecution immunity Albert said was up to the courts and the executive branch not the Congress Republican leader John Rhodes said such a resolution wouldn't have any binding effect anyway

though there might be moral reasons for passing it House leaders generally lined up against immunity though some members are for it and for and into the impeachment process and they all agreed that relations between a future president Ford and this Congress would be just fine the house talked about the resignation one product of Watergate today while it was debating a campaign finance bill another product of Watergate - echoes of the most history-making break-in this country has ever known Bruce Morton CBS News Capitol Hill across the Rotunda the Senate too was discussing immunity and impeachment Roger Mudd has the details the Senate was in a holding pattern today preparing for an anticipating tonight's speech by the president but most senators fretted about and talked about were the terms of the president's resignation should he get immunity should he get an ex president in monument's should the impeachment process go forward Republican senator Brooke of Massachusetts introduced a resolution today not legally binding that would protect the president against future criminal and civil suits I would want full confession from the president of his involvement in Watergate in all related incidents I think the American people are entitled to know all of the facts and I think the President must make a clean breast of it and when he does resign from office I would agree that he certainly should not say that I'm resigning but I'm not guilty of any offense or you just don't want the president to go to jail is that correct I maybe maybe that's exactly what it is I just can't see an American people

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I just can't see an American people American president going to jail and I just think it's wrong particularly if that American president has confessed his sins and if that American president has resigned from office and if that American president has kept us from going through a possible six-month trial but the bruk resolution will get nowhere because most Democrats who met this morning are opposed to immunity they also want some sort of presidential admission of guilt the resignation if it's a straight-out resignation I think would probably would acknowledge really that there had been wrongdoing and and my only reply when the question was raised is if the resignation contained defensive language with implications that it was it was there was still innocence then it might be the decision of the Congress and it has to be first the house than the Senate that the trial should go forward to resolve the issue I hope the president won't resign unless he's guilty and admits his guilt I think that's enough said so what emerges is a congressional consensus against granting immunity and against continuing impeachment thus in political terms the Congress appears not to be vindictive and the president is not permitted to get beyond the law Roger Mudd CBS News Capitol Hill while the nation and the world were watching the White House from a distance there were some who clustered outside the Executive Mansion skates hoping to get a first-hand glimpse of history Connie Chung reports many of the people found it difficult to explain why they were there peering through the iron fence teaming to stand watch for some there was a feeling of sadness one out-of-town

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feeling of sadness one out-of-town couple said after touring the White House we went from room to room and I just kept thinking the president's right here and this might be his last day in office others were simply curious I just thought I would I wanted to see a little bit of history if the resignation thing comes about I think it is sad I think it it impedes the impeachment process I think that's a way I want so there's no doubt in anybody's mind you think you can actually see something peering through the gates of the White House well know is perhaps used to be a small participant in what's going on I believe this is a very serious moment in the history of this country I I believe it's a tragedy that this thing has occurred inside the executive office building staff and volunteers answered calls to the president a room set up to ease an overloaded White House switchboard 500 calls an hour have poured in according to the White House 99 percent urging the president not to resign Evan stop it this lady's constantly and the people the voice of the people is really coming through is the pulse of the country I think good morning can I help you please glad that you have called sir you're causing a greater experiment for him you could contact your representatives on Capitol Hill and express your support for the president to them and they all you know in support of them we have it the single one against him and the people are very emotional I understand that there have been some very emotional calls oh yes I've been crying upset makes us have these simple the calls of support continued this

afternoon although resignation appears certain the staff assistant in charge of the phone bank said were refusing to believe it until we hear it with our own ears Connie Chung CBS News Washington mr. Nixon's admitted involvement in Watergate and his expected resignation about a quick and heavy impact on his birthplace as Terry Drinkwater reports Yorba Linda California the town and the

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Yorba Linda California the town and the house where Richard Nixon was born in 1913 in recent months the landmark had hardly been much of a tourist attraction here on Main Street there was always solid support for Nixon conservative Republicans a majority when Nixon became a congressman than a senator then vice president local people were proud of him hometown boy made good in 1968 when he was elected president the newspaper and the whole town were jubilant tonight at the or Belinda Starr the mood was very different publisher Edie Kelly I'm very sad about the whole thing or bilenda very very proud of the fact that the President of the United States came from this community and then the habit turn out as it has pretty sad are you going to change the masthead on your paper which says you ever lend up the place of president yes I'm going to drop it the community to pride until the events of this week predicting Monday when he admitted that he was involved in it and I can't speak of community but I don't think it's appropriate further at this point most everyone shares the agony and wishes it hadn't turned out this way but still there are those who want to forget and forget quickly some already talking about renaming Richard Nixon Park Terry Drinkwater CBS News Yorba Linda California and Vice President Ford's hometown today there was a different mood a mood of reserved elation of confidence of pride Ike Pappas reports from Michigan when he's in Grand Rapids the vice president likes to stop by the Elliot shop to pick up the morning papers buy some pipe tobacco and chat with his old friend red linen who has been following developments in Washington and pushing for Jerry Ford we're always honesty sincere he can work with both parties and he will work with both parties which is what they need one of the vice president's half-brothers dick still runs the family paint and

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dick still runs the family paint and varnish company he says the Ford family is remaining calm despite the mounting pressure it's either a Ford family tradition or just the Midwestern Michigan attitude towards things in Western Michigan just don't really get terribly excited about things until I actually credit the tension is apparent however at the home of dr. James Ford another half brother his wife Barbara spent the morning ironing chatting with her sister-in-law mrs. Thomas bored answering the telephone and following the news President Nixon at this hour is still in his oval office meeting privately with the Vice President Ford amid rumors that he will resign his office and will resigned today why I think we're all very proud of Jerry what he's done and all he's gone about doing what he is done thank you but I've been a very fair Nixon supporter hidden it's kind of hard to separate what you think at this point to the vice president's neighbors are preparing for some changes of their own the feeling is that before long they're going to have to reword this sign to make it read home of the President of the United States Gerald our Ford Ike Pappas CBS News East Grand Rapids has been a mysterious move at the white house tonight in advance of the president's TV speech members of the White House press corps have been locked in the briefing room there a policeman ondas guarding the door and he won't let any of the newsmen out no explanation for all of this the prospect of the impending end of the Nixon presidency in the beginning of the Ford administration is the subject of Eric sever rides commentary these are with no serious doubt the last hours of the 37th presidency of the United States other presidents including Washington were tempted to resign none dead resignation

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tempted to resign none dead resignation with dignity is the only safe and civilized way remaining to transfer the power the only alternative was trial and conviction all but certain for the past couple of weeks absolutely certain since Monday's admission of guilt in the obstruction of justice so far as is known the president has not been plea bargaining for immunity to do that or to pardon himself a constitutional possibility would be to degrade his departure his world would really end not with a bang but a whimper he must end like a man and

if he does so with a full admission that would abort all necessity of a Senate trial though not possibly the necessity of some kind of formal House action on a bill of impeachment the record ought to be clear and final as a guide for future generations in these last hours mr. Nixon could conceivably pardon his former associates who are scheduled for trial a month from tomorrow if not there is no way anybody could immunize him from being summoned as witness in those trials the next administration died of self-inflicted wounds the bottom line in a social contract between the people and their chosen leaders is integrity in the absence of that the most impressive acts of statesmanship are not enough the whole art of government said Jefferson consists in the art of being honest as for Richard Nixon the man what we are seeing in the words of one White House official today is a case of psychic suicide for more than two years he has lived with knowledge of his own guilt an awareness of that in this capital city is one reason there is no spirit here of goodness no desire to punish him further the formal institution by which we govern ourselves have worked the law has prevailed the people of Hell study our political party and electoral processes have worked badly they propelled mr. Nixon and mr. Agnew into power but those processes have never been seriously institutionalized in this country they work by hit and miss beneath the sadness here in the weariness there is the beginning of a sense of hope of a new start for the country there is a chance

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start for the country there is a chance at least that instability doubt and distrust are coming to an end it is not just the instability of the last two years but the instability at the top of the last 11 years mr. Ford would be the fourth president in a bit less than 11 years the American people are too sensitively affected by the quality and actions of government the world is too sensitive to America's moods and motions for this to continue but some of the severe problems Nixon inherited from Johnson will be inherited by Ford from Nixon inflation seems number-one statistically this summers rate means a wholesale price inflation of 20% a year no free country has lived with that for more than a couple of years and retain free democratic rule after 23 minutes of incarceration news men at the White House are now again free to leave their briefing room our continuing CBS news coverage of this historic night will resume immediately after this broadcast mr. Walter Cronkite CBS News and I'll be back in a couple of minutes

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